

**BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS****REGULAR MEETING****Monday, September 9, 2002**

Present: June Bailey, Colleen Craig, Glen Dey, Janet Miller, M.S. Mitchell, Trix Niernberger, and Joe Todd

Also Present: Jamsheed Mehta and Daniel Nguyen, Wichita-Sedgwick County Metropolitan Area Planning Department; Kathy Dittmer, Riverside Citizens Association (RCA); and Doug Kupper and Maryann Crockett (staff)

President Mitchell called the meeting to order at approximately 3:30 p.m. The minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 12, 2002, were reviewed and approved.

1. **Presentation of the KDOT 2004-2005 Proposal.** Jamsheed Mehta and Daniel Nguyen, Wichita-Sedgwick County Metropolitan Area Planning Department. Nguyen began the presentation by referring board members to the list of three proposed projects for the City to receive federal T-21 funding for development of bicycle and pedestrian pathways in Sedgwick County. He provided board members a map of the proposals and commented that all three were submittals from previous years as follows:

- The Historic Midtown bike path/greenway (Central/Waco to 15<sup>th</sup> St. N/Broadway) – he commented that this was along an abandoned railroad line and was part of the Delano Neighborhood and Historic Mid-Town Revitalization plans.
- I-135/Chisholm drainage way shared roadway and path (McAdams park to Grove Park); and
- I-135/Gypsum Creek shared use path (Stafford-Wassall-George Washington Blvd.).

Niernberger asked if bike paths were considered when streets were widened or rebuilt? She brought up several completed and on-going street widening projects in the south and east areas of the City and specifically mentioned the inner City and the older, more developed neighborhoods that had no bike paths. She made specific reference to a bicycle accident she had witnessed on Douglas Avenue near East High School. There was discussion concerning limited right-of-way in the inner City neighborhoods, zero lot lines and how difficult it was to incorporate path systems into that type of already developed infrastructure. Dey asked if Planning had a “long range” plan for the bike path system.

Jamsheed Mehta commented that the bike path system was part of the “Park and Open Space Master Plan” which was updated annually along with the Comprehensive Plan. He commented that the Land Use Resources Division of the Planning Department held public hearings to gather input from the general public, neighborhood associations and bicycles clubs.

Mitchell commented about the lack of east/west connections, which the board has mentioned during previous bicycle path discussions. Mehta mentioned the 21<sup>st</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> Street paths, right-of-way Capital Improvement Projects and the idea of paths along creeks and rivers. He also mentioned that private ownership was a hindrance to several proposed projects, particularly along the Cowskin and Calfskin Creeks. He added that the City was alert to any projects that may become available due to railroad abandonements (rail banking), such as the proposed project along West Kellogg. Dey mentioned that the City of Minneapolis had a plan where bike paths were automatically integrated into street planning and suggested that staff investigate how that was developed. There was brief discussion as to why bicycle paths work for transportation in other City's but not in Wichita.

Mehta concluded the presentation by requesting that the board provide a letter of support to be forwarded with their proposal.

On motion by Miller, second by Bailey, IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY VOTED that staff draft a letter of support for the proposed T-21 2004-2005 projects.

2. **Discussion of Proposed Botanica Expansion.** Barbara Yarnell, Director of Botanica, referred board members to a handout and map of the proposed expansion project. She reviewed several project proposals including moving the road closer to the river for easier public access to the riverbank and creating two admission areas within the garden (one at the conservatory and the one at the present location). Yarnell stated that in accordance with the Board directive to obtain neighborhood input, the plan had been presented to the Mid Town Neighborhood Association and North Riverside Neighborhood Association. She said they were also scheduled to meet with the Delano Neighborhood Association in October.

Niernberger asked Yarnell to address expansion of the formal gardens taking away public parkland and the need to make the gardens accessible to working people. Yarnell commented that Botanica staff, the Botanica Board and the volunteer organization have been exploring ways to get the public more involved in the gardens such as a "Family Fun Fair" and the Garden Party. She did mention that it is not easy to market the gardens to local citizens and since the gardens were admission driven, the first concern was that the gardens be fiscally sound. She commented that people who attend a free day or event at the gardens often do not come back if there is an admission fee. She also mentioned the need to evaluate utility and staffing costs in regard to programming additional garden hours.

Yarnell said a retreat was scheduled to discuss long range planning for the next three to five years. She added that they were also attempting to obtain sponsors for each of the proposed new gardens as well as sponsors for free events. She added that it was somewhat difficult to obtain sponsors without a commitment on the part of the City and Park Department to support the expansion plan. She said that \$38,000 had been expended on design drawings and that each step of the process was going to be expensive.

There was brief discussion concerning the possibility of allowing parking at Sim Park Golf Course for special events at Botanica. Niernberger volunteered to draft a letter. Staff said they would communicate with the Golf Course Manager Don Harrison. Mitchell mentioned fund

raising efforts, traffic flow in and around the gardens and expansion of the gardens being an appropriate use of the land.

There was brief mention of inappropriate activities taking place at the Sim Park picnic area. Kathy Dittmer, President, RCA, commented that a group of concerned citizens, public officials (including Councilwoman Sharon Fearey, County Commissioner Carolyn McGinn and representatives from Community Policing and Council Neighborhood Assistants) as well as local businesses, met for lunch at the picnic area during the week on an irregular basis to try to curb illegal activities. She commented that families used the area on the weekends. She concluded by inviting board members to lunch at the park.

Miller asked about the number of acres needed for the proposed expansion and if the Sim family had been contacted for their input and approval. Yarnell responded that it was approximately 38 acres and that Botanica staff would contact the Sim heirs at the appropriate time.

On motion by Miller, second by Todd, IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY VOTED that the Park Board support the concept of Botanica expansion into Sim Park in accordance with the plan dated June 2001 developed by Robert Page, Landscape Architect, Department of Landscape Architecture Regional and Community Planning, Kansas State University.

3. **October 14, 2002, Park Board Meeting Reschedule.** Director Kupper reported that he would be out of the office on Monday, October 14, 2002, attending a National Recreation and Park Association Conference. After brief discussion, it was the general consensus of the Board to move the meeting to Monday, October 7, 2002, at 3:30 p.m. Park and Recreation Conference Room, 11<sup>th</sup> floor, City Hall.
4. **School Board's Use of Parking Lot at Minisa Park.** Miller stated that as a part of the school bond issue, the school district would be constructing a technical center at North High School. She said the center would be located in an area that was currently being used as a parking lot. She said since parking at the school was always at a premium, construction of the technical center would create an additional burden on students and faculty to find parking other than on residential streets surrounding the building. She stated that as a solution to the parking issue, the school district had purchased seven run down houses along the eastern edge of their property to be demolished for construction of surface parking.

Miller continued by stating that the Historic Preservation Board and Historic Midtown Citizens Association were opposed to demolition of houses because they believe it causes blight that continues to grow around the areas that have been demolished. She said the neighborhood association is supportive of North High and the schools in neighborhoods concept, but at the same time they would also like to look toward the future of the entire neighborhood and eliminate blighted areas. She said further complicating the issue was the fact that the City was currently working on an Historic Midtown Plan and that a moratorium had been established on all demolition projects. She said because of the urgency to begin project construction, the neighborhood association has identified several areas where temporary parking may be possible during construction of the center and/or until an alternative solution can be reached as to the final disposition of the proposed structures to be demolished. She said several entities were working on the alternative proposal including the school district, neighborhood groups, Planning

Department and others. She identified the temporary parking areas as Minisa Park pool, the electronic trade school at 13<sup>th</sup> and Jeannette, a retail operation east of Jack's North High Carry-Out, and a portion of the parking lot at the 13<sup>th</sup> and Waco Dillons store.

There was brief discussion concerning how far the areas were from North High School. Director Kupper expressed concern that the parking lot by the shelter not be included because that was reserved for patrons who rented the facility. He also asked how the parking would be enforced and monitored. Todd commented that if the school district already owned the property where the seven homes were located, eventually the houses would be demolished and surface parking built.

On motion by Miller, second by Niernberger, IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY VOTED to approve temporary use of the 38 spaces at the North parking lot at Minisa Park (by the swimming pool) by North students and faculty until December 31, 2002. It was further clarified that the school district would be responsible for monitoring use.

5. **Director's Update.** Director Kupper reported briefly on the following:

- L'Ouverture School. Reported that the USD #259 has proposed vacating 15<sup>th</sup> Street to the North and Wabash Street to the East to facilitate traffic flow around the school, which is just west of McAdams Recreation Center.
- Linwood Park. Reported that the condemnation is proceeding on schedule. He briefly commented on the revised property appraisal.
- Grove Park Project. Reported that the Grove Park project is on track. He said some minor glitches had been worked out on the design consultant's plan on the parking lot and football fields with regard to American's with Disability Act requirements.
- K-96 Lake. Commented that work was proceeding on the handicapped accessible ramp and that a handicapped accessible picnic table had been installed at the site.
- National Guard Readiness Center. Commented that construction of the center was still planned adjacent to K-96 Lake. He said the plan included construction of a road off of Hillside with a bridge across the railroad tracks.
- Riverside Park System Master Plan. Reported that he would revisit the plan with the Riverside Citizens Association. He briefly reported on the status of the bid documents.
- National Guard. Dey reported that the National Guard would perform further tree removal at Grove Park in November.
- Volunteer Activities. Dey suggested that volunteer opportunities for various park projects be advertised be on the Internet on the City's Park and Recreation Web Site. There was brief discussion. Director Kupper indicated that staff would add volunteer opportunities to the Web Site.

- Oak Park. Miller mentioned that the “No Bicycle” signs had been removed from Oak Park. Director Kupper reported that staff was researching various locations to attempt to find an appropriate site for the mountain bikers. He added that it was anticipated that the sub-committee would recommend no bicycles in Pawnee Prairie Park at the District V Advisory Board Meeting that evening.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 5:20 p.m.

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M.S. Mitchell, President

ATTEST:

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Maryann Crockett, Clerk  
Recording Secretary